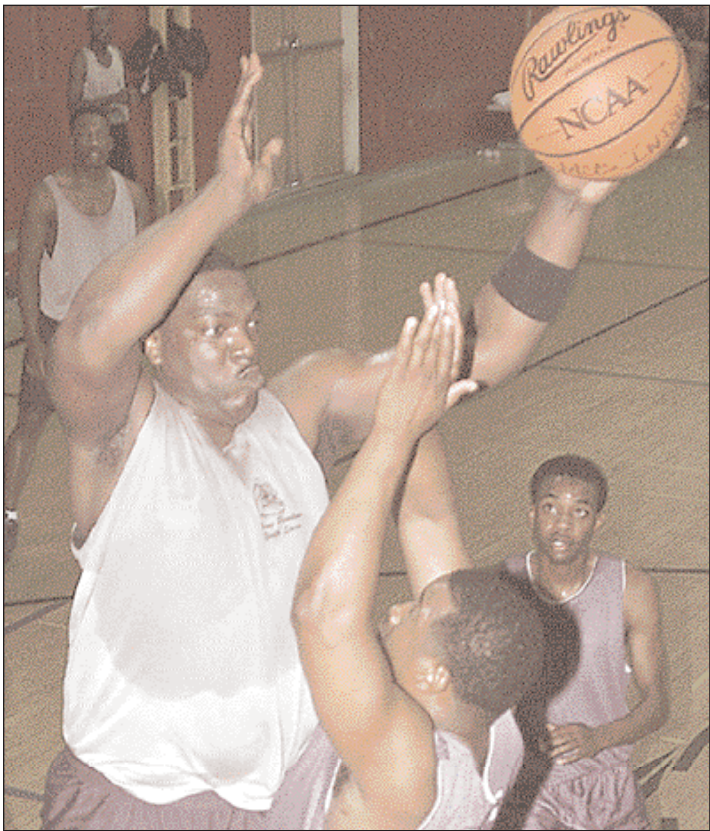


Sports

THE SCOUT

APRIL 17, 2003

SECTION C



DANIEL RAIFSNIDER

Kittrea Pearson drives to the hoop for two of his game-high 21 points.

CSSG living large in low post

■ Big men key rally, runaway from 1st Dental Bn.

RICHARDSON MIRON
SCOUT STAFF

Attention intramural basketball teams: Combat Service Support Group 14 is loaded.

Not with ammunition, although that may be the case — but with basketball talent.

The squad added a monster to its already formidable lineup two games ago when Kittrea Pearson joined the team. The bulky power forward muscled his way to a game-high 21 points and nine rebounds on April 11 in the squad's 66-54 victory over 1st Dental at The Pit.

Combining the 6-foot-1,

235-pound rock Pearson with the nonstop motor of 6-foot-3 pivotman James Dever gives this unit one of the most dominant frontcourts in the league and a head start in the race for the All-Base trophy.

"We're starting to get a real good chemistry together," Dever said outside the

beat-up gym after scoring 16 points and hauling in 11

rebounds against 1st Dental.

"We've got a real good starting lineup and we've got good depth on the bench. We're going to be tough."

Evidently.

The squad improved to 7-1 by disposing of 1st Dental, which dropped to 3-5 on the season.

And now that Pearson has joined the fold, the sky is the

limit.

"I think with Dever and I down low, other teams are going to have to make a decision on who they are going to double down low," Pearson said. "It's good for the team to have to big men like that."

Said Dever: "He's going to help out a lot in the blocks. With his big body, he's going to be able to grab a lot of offensive and defensive rebounds."

CSSG's most-electric playmaking guard, Dameian Sancho, didn't even suit up against 1st Dental. The two-time All-Marine selection is unavailable on Thursdays, when he attends classes at Palomar College here.

"We had to pick it up tonight because Sancho wasn't in the game," Dever said.

CSSG struggled at the start of the first half but managed to get untracked,

rallying from a 10-point deficit to tie the score at 27 at halftime.

But in the second half it was all CSSG. The squad unleashed a 6-0 run in the first two minutes after the intermission.

Then, during a five-minute span, CSSG scored 16 of 21 points, highlighted by strong performances from Dever, Pearson and guard Chad Shellar (nine points).

First Dental was in an uphill fight because it dressed only five players for the game. Nonetheless, Anthony Anderson (19 points), Terry Blanche (16 points) and Dan Curry (11 points) scored in double figures.

"That was a tough game," Curry said. "We played well in the first half, but we got tired. It's tough playing with only five guys, because you are worried about fouling when you have no bench."

Flag experts' advice: Take a hiker

RICHARDSON MIRON
SCOUT STAFF

All right draftniks, it's getting close to your favorite time of year.

The upcoming NFL meat market — where pro teams annually select college players — is less than two weeks away (April 26-27). But before you glue yourself to the tube to gaze at Mel Kiper for two days straight, imagine you're the general manager of a flag football team here at Camp Pendleton.

That's right, a flag football team.

Now, pretend you're putting together a group of players to lock horns in the intramural league, which kicks off on April 23.

When constructing this team, you must remember things are much different than the pro ranks, which ESPN's draft guru Kiper makes his living analyzing.

Sure, flag football follows the same concept: Quarterback is priority No. 1.

But priority No. 2 is where things get interesting. This is where flag football finds itself worlds apart from the NFL, the college ranks or any other league in the world.

In this league, the second most important man on the field is the center. That's right, the big, bulky guy who seldom touches the ball, other than to snap it back to the quarterback, though he is eligible to catch passes.

But local flag football experts says it's not what he

See Flag, Page C6



DANIEL RAIFSNIDER

HMMT-164 third baseman Mark Tumblin throws to first for the out as Security Battalion's Frank Werner races down the base path.

Phrogs now 7-1, get jump on Security

■ Nine-run first inning fuels runaway that keeps HMMT 164 atop league standings

JOHN RAIFSNIDER
SPORTS EDITOR

Security Battalion had a chance to draw even with Marine Medium Helicopter Training Squadron 164 atop the intramural softball standings when the two teams met April 10 at Fenton Field.

HMMT-164 had just been stung by a 5-2 loss — its first of the season — two nights earlier to Weapons and Field Training Battalion.

But, although the Cops showed signs of life late in the game, they spotted the Phrogs way too many runs early to extend the aviators' losing streak.

Instead, the Phrogs — paced by Trevor Britton's four hits and Bobby Teague's five RBIs — are still flying high with a 7-1 record after a 17-9 win.

The Cops saw their chance slip away very early in the contest as the Phrogs

strung together 10 hits that pushed across nine runs in the top half of the first inning.

Security's response to the breakout offensive barrage staged by HMMT-164? Zilch, nada, nicht.

No runs on two hits in the bottom of the first inning. Same for the second and third innings.

The Cops finally pushed across their first run in fourth inning, but the Phrogs responded by upping the lead to 12-1, thanks in large part to the hitting of Britton and Johnny Teem.

HMMT-164 rode the early hot hitting

See Phrogs, Page C3

Caution flag spells trouble for Hamilton at N'ville

JOHN RAIFSNIDER
SPORTS EDITOR

Everything was going just right for Bobby Hamilton Jr. during Saturday's NASCAR Busch Series Pepsi 300 race at Nashville Superspeedway. With just under 50 laps to go in the 225-lap race around the 1.33-mile facility — which Hamilton calls his home track — the Team Marines driver was nearly two seconds in front of the second-place car, driven by David Green.

Hamilton entered pit road as the race leader with only 43 laps to go, took on fuel and two right-side tires, and headed back out onto the track, completing what would be his last Green-flag pit stop of the race. As Hamilton eased the Team Marines' red No. 25 Ford Taurus back into traffic, the seventh caution flag of the race flew, essentially freezing the field and relegating Hamilton to 16th place by lap 40, nearly a full lap down to the race leaders.

After having so much go so right for so long in the race, the second-to-last caution period ruined what looked like a sure win for Hamilton, who managed to climb to 10th by race end.

Green won the race, his first Busch Series win since



Hamilton

Robert Allen wins again, wants Bernard Hopkins

■ Former Pendleton Marine seeks third shot at IBF champ after knockout victory

WILLIAM WASSERSUG
FOR THE SCOUT

Former Camp Pendleton Marine Robert Allen recently told The Scout his sights are set on International Boxing Federation middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, even

though Hopkins doesn't seem interested in a third bout with Allen.

But the way Allen's pro career is going, Hopkins may have trouble ignoring Allen — who holds two belts of his own — much longer.

Allen, reigning champion of the United States Boxing Federation and North American Boxing Federation, upped his pro record to 35-4 (26 knockouts) April 6 with an eighth-round TKO of Jesse Aquino (16-3-3). The fight, held at the Silver Star Hotel and Casino Pearl River Resort in Choctaw, Miss., was featured on the Fox Sports Network's Sunday Night Fights.

Allen's promoter, Dan Goosen, president of Goosen-Tutor Promotions, says it's time for Hopkins to give Allen another shot.

"We're ready to fight Hopkins now. That's the fight that we want, that's the fight that we're gonna get. It's long overdue," Goosen said, noting that it's been more than four years since the two squared off.

Allen, the IBF's No. 1 contender, had been scheduled to fight Maselino Masoe, ranked fifth by the World Boxing Association. But an injury sidelined Masoe, and Aquino stepped forward.

Allen took control from the start

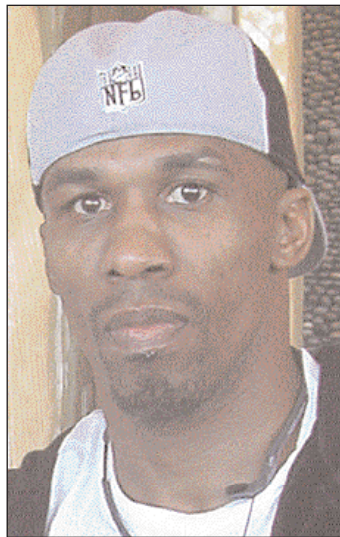
and made his first statement of the evening with a powerful left in the second, stunning Aquino.

In the third, Allen stepped up the pressure. He threw a hard straight right that sent Aquino staggering into the corner.

From there, Allen put on cruise control — at least into the fifth, when Aquino caught Allen with a quick left-right combo that sent Allen reeling across the ring.

Aquino followed Allen into the corner and continued his assault, but Allen dodged two shots in close and

See Allen, Page C3



Robert Allen

Castaneda's trey keys MHG's second win

■ AAS can't answer triple with 1:12 left in nail-biter

RICHARDSON MIRON
SCOUT STAFF

It took a clutch 3-pointer by Justice Castaneda to give I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group its second win of the season. Castaneda landed the trey, with his foot barely behind the 21-foot, 3-

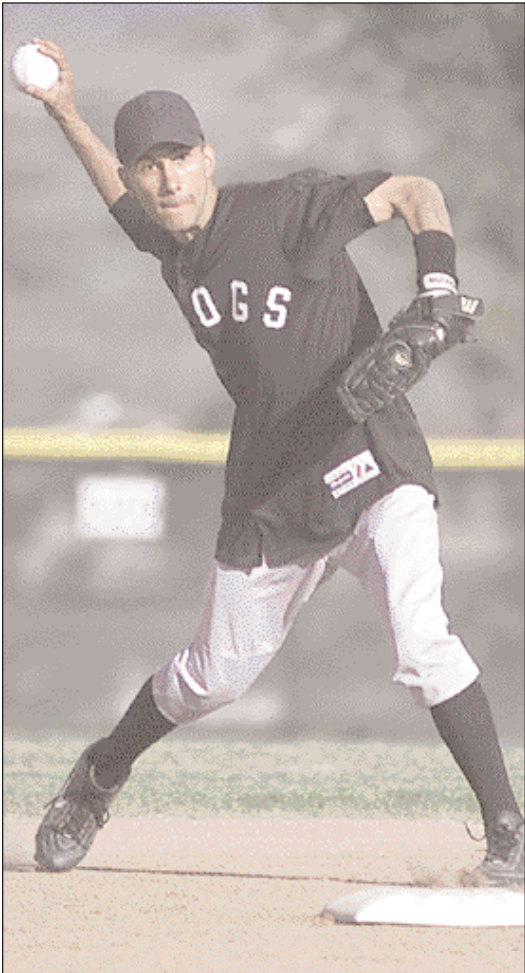
point line, with 1:12 remaining April 11 as MHG downed Assault Amphibian School Battalion 42-40 at The Pit. "I was open and I just took the shot," said Castaneda, who scored a game-high 13 points. "We played really hard tonight, and it was going to take a clutch shot to win. "For me, it's just nice to hit any open shot. I've been cold the last few games. So it's nice to win one."

MHG	42
AAS	40

Castaneda's big shot put MHG on top, 41-40. But it took some stellar defense in the last minute to save the victory. "We were do for a win," the guard said after his squad improved to 2-6. The Gators fell to 3-4. "We have played pretty well lately. Tonight we played real hard, and we came together because of teamwork." The Gators took the lead, 26-25, shortly after intermission, rallying to score six straight points immediately after play resumed.

From that point on, the game went back and forth until the final buzzer. The Gators had the lead, 39-38, with less than three minutes to play after guard Damien Stewart hit a 5-foot jumper along the baseline. Seconds later, player/coach Randy Eckiwauda hit one of two free throws and the Gators clung to a two-point advantage. That's when Castaneda, a lefty, found the sweet spot from long range

Trailing by one, the Gators had a chance to tie the score in the final minute, but a traveling violation on Stewart and and Eckiwauda's 8-foot bank shot that rolled in and out killed AAS' last hopes. "We're just not finishing games right now," said Stewart, who scored eight points. "This team is better than how it has played. And we have heart, but we're just not getting it done at the end. "We're playing hard, and I think we'll be all right as long as we keep playing hard."



Trevor Britton of HMMT-164 throws to first base to record an out against Security Battalion. Britton had four hits in the game.

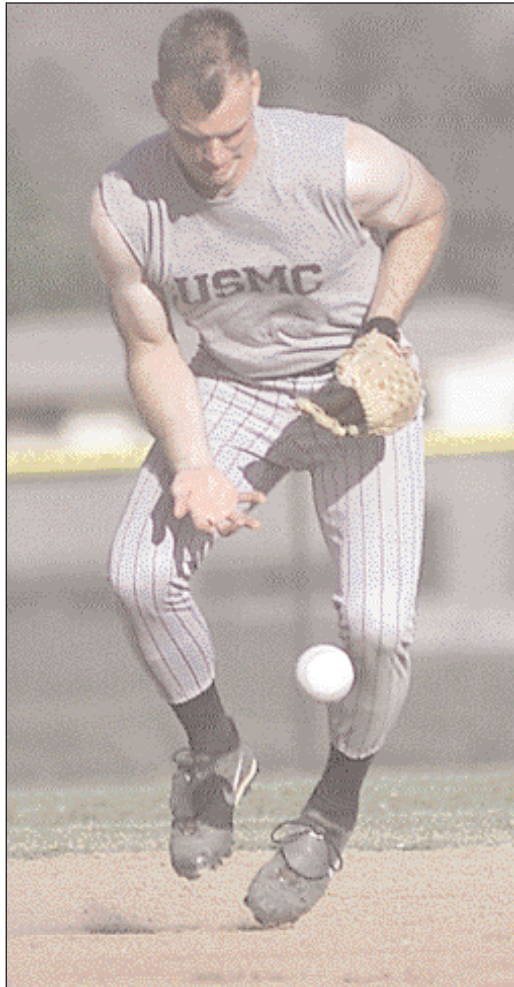
Phrogs

From Page C1

of Britton and Teem and the late-game slugging of Teague to a reasonably ho-hum win over sluggish Security. Cops' coach David Thomas said three factors affected his team's play against the Phrogs. "We didn't hit the ball, people showed up late and some didn't show up at all," an obviously disappointed Thomas said afterward. "We just were never really in the game." Certainly not in the early innings, but the Cops (5-2) staged a late rally that had HMMT-164 coach Mike Tumblin concerned enough to hold a powwow with his players after Security Bn. had closed to within eight runs. "We usually start off well, and then we get comfortable with a big lead, we get too relaxed and we let teams get back into the ballgame," said Tumblin. "I called everyone in after the fifth inning, when they scored those three runs on us, and I told the guys that we needed to shut them down right here and right now." But the Phrogs didn't. After scoring three runs in their half

of the sixth, they yielded five runs in the bottom of the stanza. Four of them came after the Cops were down to their final out. "When we lost to Weapons, it wasn't a very good night for us," said Tumblin. "I thought we were going to do the same thing tonight — I just don't know what it is. To tell you the truth, I've been trying to figure it out all season. "We come out and hit the ball well in the early innings and then it goes away. Then we come back in the later innings and we start hitting the ball again. I don't why we play that way, but that's the way it is for us." The Phrogs' Britton had batted three times by the end of the third inning, collecting three hits, including two doubles and three runs scored, thanks to Teem's two doubles over the same span. Then the Phrogs' bats went relatively quiet. HMMT-164 (7-1) scored two runs in the fifth inning on Teague's two-run double. Teague also drove in two more runs with a double in the sixth inning. Britton finished with four hits in five at-bats and scored four times. Teem was 3-for-5 and scored three times. Teague was 3-for-5 and notched five

RBI. Thomas admits the Cops could be accused of trying to hit the ball too hard in the early going, then settling for dinks later in games. "We tend to do that. We try too hard in the beginning, and then we settle down and start hitting the ball, and usually that works for us. But it didn't work out for us today," he said. Thomas and slugger Mark Pate each had two hits for Security Battalion. That Thomas was around to get his second hit was a minor miracle. In the third inning, while playing left-center field, Thomas dived in vain for a fly ball. In the process, he impacted the ground hard and had the wind knocked out of him. After a few minutes, Thomas made it to his feet — only to stretch out once again to make a diving catch on the next batter. With an empty bench, Thomas said he had no choice but to stay in the game. "There was no one to take my place in the field because we only have 10 players here today," he said. "The first time I hit the ground, it hurt when it happened, but you gotta keep going. The second time hurt, too, but not as bad — I caught the ball on that one."



Security Battalion infielder Frank Werner reaches for a ground ball against HMMT-164. The 17-9 win kept the Phrogs atop the intramural league.

Allen

From Page C1

battled his way out of the jam. The shot served as a wakeup call for Allen, who came back strong in the next three rounds. He connected frequently and seemed to slow Aquino. In the eighth, Allen finally ended the match when he pounded Aquino with a staggering left, followed by a right that sent Aquino reeling. Allen moved in for the kill, but took only two steps before the referee ended the fight. After the fight, in a televised interview, Allen said Aquino gave him a small challenge but no worries about the outcome. Allen added that he wasn't thrilled with his performance. "The guy gave me every opening possible. I just couldn't get it," said Allen, who served with 1st Marine Regiment here in the early 1990s. "He gave me shots, I didn't reach him. I didn't get him. He wasn't a great defensive or awkward fighter. He gave me shots. I just didn't take charge of them." Allen said he took a few tough shots but was never hurt. "He shook me up. I seen

stars a few times on some of his shots. I was OK," Allen said. "I was in pretty good shape. I saw some stars. He knocked me off balance. For the most part, I was fine. He never really hurt me. Nothing detrimental. Nothing like that." Allen's sparring partner, former WBC welterweight champ Vernon Forrest, was on hand and agreed with Allen's assessment. "Sometimes I want to strangle this guy," Forrest said in the ring as he jokingly put a wrap around his friend. "I see this guy day in and day out execute. This guy is one of the most technical guys in the game. Each time I see him fight, he only shows 60 percent of it. Sometimes I want to bust in and tell him, 'man just do what you do every day.'" Allen said the win makes his position stronger for pressing for a fight with Hopkins. "Keep working, keep working," Allen said when asked what he needed to do to get a rematch with the champ. "Whether I made a statement tonight, I don't know. You know I want the fight. I deserve it. I've been working hard. I'm No. 1 again, staying on top. Trust me, when I get in front of him again, it won't be the same guy." Allen was alluding to his

last fight with Hopkins on Feb. 6, 1999. Hopkins stopped Allen in the seventh round. Allen said he didn't have his best stuff that night. The fight came six months after a no-contest between the two fighters. Allen seemingly got the best of Hopkins for three rounds. In the fourth, Hopkins stumbled backward out of the ring after referee Mills Lane separated them. Hopkins came up hobbling and couldn't continue — leaving Allen nothing to show for his impressive performance. Goosen says Allen won't disappoint if given another chance. "Let me tell you, he's going to be a worthy challenger. I know darn well. Trust me. I was there the first fight. I saw what Bernard did when the going got tough with Robert in there. Second fight Hopkins came back. We're even now. We want that third one." In the Feb. 27 edition of The Scout, Allen said he was hoping for a date with Hopkins after the Hopkins-Marrade Hakkar fight. Hopkins beat Hakkar, the No. 1 contender in the World

Boxing Council, last month. Allen said Hopkins hasn't been taking his calls. Goosen said Hopkins may have no choice if he wants to keep his title. "There's no busy," Goosen said, responding to the question of whether he would keep Allen busy with smaller fights until Hopkins responds. "We're going right at Hopkins right now. The mandatory is due. It's our position now that he fights Robert Allen now or gives up his title. We'd rather fight Hopkins. We don't want him to give up his title. We want Hopkins in there. If he doesn't, we're going after that title. "I don't care who's holding it. It's up to Bernard right now, it's not up to us." Fox Sports Net announcer Rich Marotta said he thinks Allen will get his fight. "Bernard likes to fight his mandatories," Marotta said. "He likes to hold his belts. I think he may try to take care of the mandatory and fight Robert." Check local listings for possible reruns of Allen's victory over Aquino. Fox Sports Net regularly reruns recent fights.

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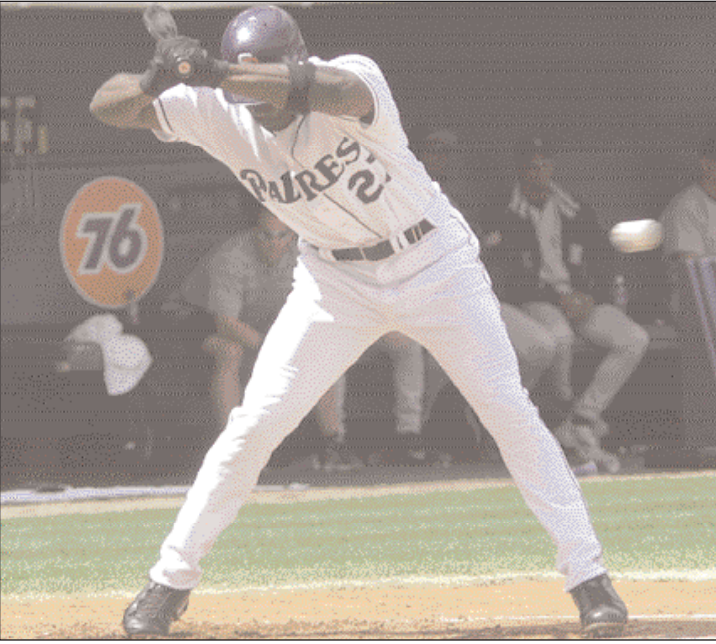
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TURNER'S OUTDOORSMAN

GUNS/FISHING

Padres inch closer to .500 before long road haul



RICHARDSON MIRON
SCOUT STAFF

Maybe naysayers were wrong to write the Padres off prior to the start of the season. Maybe all those, who swore the Friars were destined to

lose 100 games, will be proven misguided. But so far, the club is making the so-called experts re-evaluate their assessments. The season isn't even two weeks old, so the club still has much to prove. But the Padres have been a pleasant surprise, relying on execution of fundamentals, to win ball games.

With Sunday's 6-2 victory over the Colorado Rockies, the Friars improved to 6-7, just a game under .500, which is a mark pessimistic prognosticators considered impossible for this bunch. "I've said all along that we're a team that has to execute," Padres manager Bruce Bochy was quoted on the club's Web site Sunday after clinching the rubber game against the Colorado Rockies in front of 20,316 at Qualcomm Stadium. "We're just the kind of team that has to do the little things." Back in 1998, when the club went to the World Series, Bochy was inclined to sit back in the dugout and wait for one of his stars to hit the big homerun. But this year, Bochy won't be so fortunate, because his roster doesn't allow him that luxury. This group is going to have to perform the "little things" like bunting to move runners over, sacrificing runners in from third with less than two outs, making good base running decisions and solid de-

fense to win games. These tasks have been performed well by solid role players like Ramon Vazquez, Mark Lorretta, Lou Merloni, Dave Hansen and Keith Lockhart, among others. However, in Sunday's victory the Padres were lucky to get the big bomb Bochy used to be accustomed to. Outfielder Rondell White hit his third homer of the season, highlighting a 4-run seventh inning that put the Pads on top for good. "It was great to see, especially late in the game," Bochy said of the big inning his club used to top the Rockies (7-5). "We had some good at-bats there." The Padres, who lost slugger Phil Nevin in Spring Training, are also hitting better than expected. The team boasts a .274 average thus far, but has only cranked six homeruns on the year. No doubt, the Friars, who are on the road until April 29 when they open up a six-game homestand where they will face the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Philadelphia Phillies, will



have to continue executing fundamentals if they hope to overcome their lack of power. But nonetheless, the win was very encouraging, because by winning the three-game series against the Rockies, the club is proving to many it can compete in the competitive National League West. The Padres are a combined 5-2

against the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Rockies. It's the N.L. champion San Francisco Giants who the Friars have struggled against. But losing five-of-six games to them doesn't mean the Padres are an inept squad. The Giants, who are 10-1 at this point, look like they are the team to beat, once again, in the National League.



Rondell White of the Padres, above left, avoids an inside pitch. Above right, Oliver Perez of the Padres was off-target Sunday against the Rockies. Left, several hundred San Diego-based Marines salute the Stars and Stripes during the national anthem prior to the Padres-Rockies game Sunday at Qualcomm Stadium. Right, the Padres' Ramon Vazquez tags out the Rockies' Preston Wilson at second base. San Diego closed out its latest homestand by beating the Rockies, 6-2. The win improved their record to 6-7.

PHOTOS BY
DANIEL RAIFSNIDER



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Marine to try hand at sports team ownership

■ Miramar master sergeant dons helmet of player, hat of football team owner

JOHN RAIFSNIDER
SPORTS EDITOR

For much of her 20-year Marine Corps career, Natalie Gorman has worn three hats — one of a Communication and Information Services Marine, one of a wife to her husband Michael, and one of mother to her two children Darris and Kyla. Last year, Gorman decided to add a helmet to her hat rack — as in football helmet.

Gorman, 39, of Horse

Cave, Ky., says last year she was lured by what she considered a rare opportunity to play tackle football for the San Diego Sunfire, a women's professional team. She was good enough in her new role as a fullback to play in every game last season for the Sunfire, which made it to the American Football Women's League championship game last December in La Jolla.

The Sunfire lost to the Long Beach Aftershock, 12-7, in the title game.

"I've always been very athletic, so I didn't see any problem with playing tackle football, even at the professional level," Gorman says of her venture into the sport.

"I'm really a basketball player at heart, but football, it was about what I had ex-

pected, although I didn't realize women could hit so hard."

After only one season with the Sunfire, Gorman sought a more direct role in the day-to-day operations of the team, perhaps in the front office, in addition to her responsibilities as a player.

When that didn't happen with the Sunfire — Gorman wouldn't discuss the details — she became disenchanted and set her sights elsewhere. Within months, the right opportunity arose, and now Gorman has a brand-new hat on her rack — that of co-owner on the newest women's football team in the Southland, the Southern California Scorpions.

Based in Temecula, Gorman and fellow owners Christina Suggett and Eu-

gene Burgess are hoping to attract fans and players from the tri-county areas of San Diego, Orange and Riverside. The team, which will hold its second open-tryout session Saturday in Temecula, hopes to attract Marines for a look-see, Gorman said.

"We think there are about six women Marines that are going to make it to the tryout," said Gorman.

"I hope they can, because it would be nice having more Marines on our team."

Neither of the other Scorpions owners are new to the sport.

Suggett, a healthcare executive and mother of two, played linebacker for the Sunfire during the 2001 and 2002 seasons.

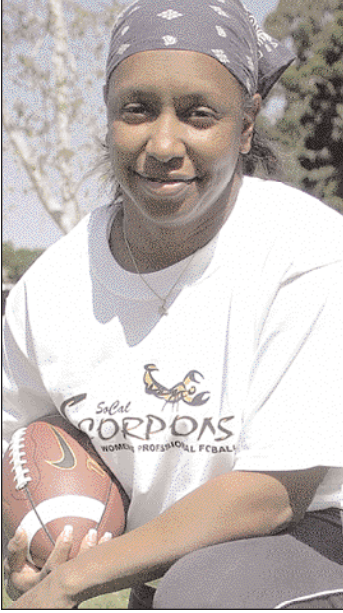
Burgess played at Penn

State and later with the New York Jets during the '95-'96 season. Burgess is also an assistant to Scorpions head coach Michael Suggett.

The WPFL has grown from 12 teams in 2002 to 19 for the 2003 season. The Scorpions were accepted into the WPFL last month during the league's board of directors annual meetings, Gorman said. Nine other franchise cities are being considered. Ironically, the Sunfire was also recently voted into the WPFL.

Saturday's tryouts will be held in Temecula at the SW Soccer Club field on Diaz Road.

For more information on the Scorpions, visit their Web site at www.socalscorpions.com or call (619) 788-4363.



Master Sgt. Natalie Gorman

Hamilton

From Page C1

1996.

"That yellow flag was the last thing we needed to have happen to us, especially after we just pitted," said a disappointed Hamilton, who will mingle with fans Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Main-side Center here before racing in Fontana the following Saturday.

"We were the car to beat, nobody was running faster than us — not before and certainly not after that caution. That's the kind of thing you want to avoid at all costs, but this time it bit us."

Team Marines crew chief Fred Wanke and his crew had given Hamilton the fastest

car on the track, as evidenced by the large margin he held over the rest of the field for most of the race. The No. 25 car led the most laps on Saturday, earning Hamilton five bonus points.

"Fred and the guys gave me a great car, and the worst we would have finished was second to Green, but you can't get caught by those caution flags when you're coming out of the pits," said Hamilton.

"Something like that will just kill your day and that's what happened to us.

We had a great car and a great run, but the result ... well, it wasn't what we knew we could have done."

By skirting three wrecks, Hamilton brought home an undamaged racecar to Wanke; and although he did-

n't deliver a win, his Nashville finish helped lift him to 14th in the Busch Series point standings, a jump of five spots. In the series' two previous races at Texas and Talladega, Hamilton was involved in accidents that saw him drop out of the top 10 in points, all the way to 19th.

"Both of those deals were unfortunate," Hamilton said in recalling the Texas incident that occurred just 31 laps into the 200-lap race — and his tangle at Talladega only 10 laps into the 117-lap contest.

"Those kinds of things happen at Talladega, but you don't expect it so much at Texas. I was glad to get back to my home track and do some racing," he said.

"We came out of here in

pretty good shape and we'll be ready for California in a couple of weeks."

Engineers at Ford have been working with Wanke recently on making the Team Marines new 2003 Taurus body more aerodynamic. The fruit of the labors, says Hamilton, should be evident at the Californiaspeedway. com 300 race set for April 26 in Fontana.

"Those guys at Ford have really been helping us a lot lately. I guess they finally saw that we have a top-notch program here, and now they're willing to give us a hand at figuring out what we've been doing wrong," said Hamilton.

"They put our car in the wind tunnel and found a lot of things that we had overlooked in getting the car

ready for the bigger tracks like Daytona, Talladega and California.

"We were able to work with them and get a few things smoothed-out that should really help our performance on the track."

Two years ago, Hamilton won the pole for the Busch Series race at Fontana, but he says the two-mile race-track holds no special meaning for him.

"I like racing at tracks like Nashville," he said.

"You can really run fast there because it is a fairly big track, but it's still small enough to give the fans a view of some real good racing.

"The California track is like so many other tracks we race on — it's what I call a cookie-cutter track, just like

Las Vegas and Michigan and a bunch of others that are all designed the same way. Sure you can go fast at tracks like that, but there really isn't much racing — you know, like the side-by-side stuff — going on at those kinds of tracks."

Hamilton may have a different opinion of the Fontana facility if he can parlay his team's recent performance gains into a trip to victory lane next week.

"We're a little frustrated by what's happened to us lately, like at Nashville, we know we should have won that race," said Hamilton.

"But we're going to bring our car to California, with all the new things we've learned lately, and we're going to make a run for it."

Flag

From Page C1

snares but what he snaps that makes him valuable.

"It's a game of skill, you need skilled ballplayers," head official Chuck Guy said during the league's preseason meeting on April 9. "You need a good passer, but you also need a good long snapper. ... A guy who can throw the ball and a guy who can snap the ball."

At least one coach in attendance was on the same page as Guy, ranking a dependable lineman on the same plane as a go-to receiver or running back.

"In flag football you want to use the shotgun," said 1st Supply Battalion coach Sven Hestrand, who has coached football at the college level. "(A dependable snapper) gives a little more time to spread the formation. If you can go to a shotgun, it gives you a little bit longer to see the field."

The key word there is "if." Teams without a reliable center can't go to a deep shotgun — a huge disadvantage in flag football, local experts say.

But some traditionalists still value offensive weapons more than the treasured snapper.

"I still think I'd take a wide receiver, because he's the one who is going to put up points," said Assault Amphibian School Battalion coach Christopher Jones.

True. But consider this: It doesn't matter how fast a receiver is if the quarterback doesn't have time to take the snap and get off a pass.

"If the center doesn't know how to snap, you are going to be in trouble," Maintenance Battalion's Darnell Johnson said. "It's definitely one of the most vital players on the team."

So now you know. If you were preparing to draft players for a flag football team, you'd have a different game plan on Draft Day. Your second team need wouldn't necessarily be a speedy, sticky-handed receiver or a running back with moves like Shakira.

It wouldn't even be a mammoth offensive tackle to protect your valued gunslinger's blind side, or a shutdown defensive back.

It just might be a snapper.

Ready to roll

The Commanding General's Cup Flag Football League will kick off Wednesday with games

scheduled weekly on that day.

For many on base, the sport is seen as a primer for the tackle football league, which starts play on July 14.

"We're going to have a good season," intramural sports coordinator Chuck Pearce said after the meeting on April 9.

Pearse said he is expecting 8-10 teams. Normally the

league consists of 14-16 teams, but participation in athletics has been down because of deployments.

"I'd say we are happy with the amount of participation it looks like we're going to get with the flag football league," Pearce said. "If we end up with 10 teams, we're only down four teams, and considering the circumstances, that isn't so bad."

One unit scheduled to play in both the softball and basketball leagues was 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. But the majority of the unit had to pick up and deploy after three weeks of participation.

"We're still going to

give them their CG's Cup Points, because they called us and let us know they were going to be heading out," said intramural sports coordinator Frank Jakka.

Jakka, who is running the softball league, and Kerrie Hood, who adminis-

ters the basketball league, plan on giving future scheduled opponents of 4th LAR forfeit victories, rather than reorganizing the already existing schedule.

"That's the most fair thing to do at this point,"

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